



Harriet Martineau, ca. 1854.

THE SOLDIER AND SAILOR:

THEIR HEALTH.

In former days it would have been a dreary task to describe the condition and prospects of our Soldiers and Sailors in regard to health. Neither the men themselves, nor society in general, knew that the perils of warfare and of wind and weather were less to be dreaded than those of disease in the barrack and the ship; but there was some general notion of the ravages of ship fever, and of epidemics in camps abroad. The Walcheren expedition in 1809 has ever since been regarded as an illustration of the very worst circumstances in which a body of soldiers can find themselves; but, till we had warning from the Crimean war, we were not fully aware that the calamities of the Walcheren

expedition might be reproduced at any time, and that a mortality quite as needless, though less excessive, was always going on, wherever the British army was distributed over the world. We know all about it now; and this is the same thing as saying that such mischief can never happen again.

I can just remember the sending out of those forty thousand men to Walcheren, nearly the worst known place for marsh fever in the world: yet no precautions were taken, no special provision of doctors, nurses, medicines, and comforts was made, because it was to be a secret where the force was going. So the men sank down by hundreds in a day, among the slimy sands on which they slept, and the stagnant water, alive with insects, which was all they had to drink; and within three months there were only four thousand of the forty thousand men fit for duty. What reinforcements were sent, I do not know; and the records of the Walcheren camp are actually lost, for want of understanding the value of experience; but we are in possession of the astounding fact that, after the thousands of deaths on the spot, there were 35,500 of the Walcheren soldiery admitted into the hospitals at home, in the course of the next winter and spring.

The mischief did not end even here. Lord Wellington was conducting the Peninsular war at that time. All his resources were scanty — men, supplies, money, and everything; and yet he had, on an average, twenty-one men ill in every hundred. The poor fellows were not only useless but dreadfully burdensome. They could not be moved; they occupied healthy men in taking care of them, and they were a prodigious expense. How was it that nearly a quarter of his force was always ill? It was partly owing to the general ignorance of the management of health on a large scale; but it was yet more because the Walcheren patients were sent out to Portugal as soon as they were able to go. The voyage and the southern climate, it was thought, would set them up completely; but the first broiling noon or night dew prostrated them again; and they lay, as ill as ever, in every village along the march of the British army.

Where there is a constant low state of health, there is a constant low state of morals; and it is no wonder that the British soldier was, in those days, a rather disreputable member of society. It always hurt the national feeling, to say so: but it was undeniably true. Wellington's despatches show that he thought so; and he caused great offence in the army by the plainness with which he spoke in his public orders. The wonder would have been if the case had been otherwise. Sickly men, reckless of life because they do not expect to live, always do, and always will, make their short life what they call a merry one: and so our soldiers in the Peninsula, always brave in battle, were mischievous at other times — breaking into the wine cellars, and indulging in every kind of excess. The natural consequence of such conduct was punishment by the lash; and the consequence of that punishment was debasement and further recklessness, disease, and death.

This was not the way to make the British army a safe defence at home, or an honour to our country abroad; and in fact the evil reputation which has hitherto attached to the ordinary soldiery of all countries, was the lot of the English soldier half a century ago, and up nearly to the present time. Even at this day it is but too true that the scamp element is large in our army. All our soldiers are volunteers; and till very recently there have been drawbacks in the lot of the soldier which deterred thousands of men who would have been a great advantage to the national defence, while their

proper place has been filled by worthless fellows who have entered the army as a refuge, or for swindling purposes. Even now the amount of desertion is shocking, because it shows how many thieves have got into the force. These rogues enlist, desert, and sell their outfit, and enlist again under another name. They are not only an affliction in themselves, but they deter good men from entering. They have seriously lowered the character of the whole force; and it will take some time to bring up the general character of the British soldier to a level with his reputation for valour. But the condition and prospects of the soldier are immeasurably superior to what they were five years ago; and there is no longer the excuse for recklessness that the soldier's life is of less value than that of others.

We may remember that, about a dozen years ago, there was a stir in the public mind about improving the mind and life of the soldier. We heard of a good deal of effort to supply the men with instruction in regimental schools, and with books and newspapers for evening reading. Much kind feeling was called forth, valuable suggestions were offered; and not a little good was really effected. If it had been only that the soldiers saw that their fellow-citizens cared for them, in peace as well as in war, the benefit would not have been small. But experience has since shown us that we had not then got hold of the right handle. The soldier must, like other people, have his life, health, and comfort provided for, before he can be raised in the scale of intelligence, morals, and manners.

The advantages of the soldier's calling would seem to be great. He is exempt from the anxieties which belong to uncertainty of employment and earnings; his wants are provided for with absolute certainty, in regard to food, clothing, and habitation. His money earnings, if small, are constant; he has not to go through an apprenticeship to his business, but receives pay from the hour when he begins to learn his work. Except in rare seasons of warfare, he is never overtaken; and, in those seasons, the novelty of travel, the complacency belonging to personal importance, the opportunity of distinction, and all the strong emotions which belong to campaigning, are much more than a compensation for toil; so that all real soldiers rejoice in the summons to go out to the scene of war. In case of wounds there is a pension; and there is now a long perspective of honours and rewards for military merit, open to the humblest member of the army. All these advantages failed, as we have seen, to attract the young men of the middle as well as the lower classes, while the discomfort of the soldier's life lowered the soldier's quality. Now they may have their fair effect, because the health and welfare of the profession are cared for as they never were before. Among mechanics, the rate of death has been a little more than 13 per thousand; but as soon as the mechanics turned soldiers, they died at the rate of from 17 to 20 per thousand, according to the places and circumstances in which they were appointed to live. Once more the turn has been taken; and, generally speaking, it is the soldier's own fault if his chance for life and health is lower than that of his brothers on the farm or in the workshop. We are not yet in possession of the Barrack Report, which will tell us what has been actually done to improve the soldier's dwelling, and what more is recommended. Meantime, we all understand that the overcrowding of sleeping-rooms, and the consequent heat and bad air, are largely owing to the soldiers themselves. At least, it is plain that the men themselves lower the better sort of rooms to the level of the worse by stopping up all air holes. The air becomes poisoned very soon, by the breath of the inmates; and this, by itself, may account for a considerable number of the yearly deaths in the army. There is henceforth to be such an inspection of every apartment in

every barrack as shall prevent such poisoning through the lungs. It will not be in the power of any inmate to stop out the air; no more than the proper number will be put into any one room: there will be an end of the barbarous old practices by which bad smells are caused in barrack rooms; and a regular care of the drainage is already a matter of course. The Duke of Wellington was once appealed to by parties in the Tower who could not agree whether men or blankets should be put into a barrack which was excessively damp. The official who had charge of the blankets alleged that they must have the dry barrack because they would be ruined in the damp one; and the regimental officer said the same about his men, whom he considered the more valuable article of the two. The Duke agreed with him. In regard to damp barracks every where the question is now virtually settled, though there is much to do yet before our soldiers can be lodged as well as they ought to be, even at home. In India, Sir Charles Napier began an improvement in military building so remarkable that the soldiers persist in calling the new edifices Napier barracks. The reform is secure there; but there are several of our colonies still unfavourably distinguished for the mortality in the regiments stationed there. In Parliament and out of it such places must be watched till all our soldiers are placed high and dry, in well-ventilated barracks.

A provision is matured for our troops being better lodged in camp, and on the march, than any other army perhaps ever was.

Till recently, the choice of lodgings, or of the spot for encampment, was the business of the quartermaster, who had no concern with the health of the troops, but only with the supply of their main wants. He looked for wood and water, and for space enough; and if he found these, with ground which would bear the weight of the camp, he was satisfied. If the medical men saw reason to disapprove the choice, they could do nothing. They were charged only with the sick and wounded. They were not asked for an opinion; and they had no right to urge their views on the officer in command. If any one ventured to do so, he was likely to be told that when his advice on military matters was desired, it would be asked. All this is mended now.

It is recognised at present that an education which prepares doctors to deal with sickness and wounds is altogether different from one which teaches the conditions of health, and how to secure them. For the first time, the care of the health (as well as of the sickness) of the army is committed to a body of officers, properly educated for the purpose. The vague and comprehensive office of the army-doctor is now distributed among three functionaries. One order of inspectors and doctors takes charge of the sick and wounded, and the hospitals which contain them. Another takes charge of the health of the force, and is responsible for the good situation of the camp, unless the commanding officer sees reason to overrule the advice he is always to receive. The drainage, cleanliness, dryness, and wholesomeness of the ground, and the airiness and wholesomeness of quarters in towns, are in the charge of these sanitary officers. The third set take care of the statistics of the medical department of the army. They note all the facts of soil, climate, and local diseases: they keep the medical case books, and register the sicknesses under heads carefully arranged, and the recoveries and deaths. In a few years we shall thus know what the liabilities of soldiers are in various climates and situations, and what are the commonest diseases among a great body of men collected at home or abroad; and we shall no longer make our preparations at random, but, in each

case, with a clear and intelligent aim. The army doctors are henceforth to go through the ordinary medical and surgical education first, and then to have an additional training to fit them to manage the diseases which most afflict armies, and the hurts which are received in battle. They are to study the diseases of tropical countries, and the epidemics which prevail in different places, as well as army surgery. Thus, when the soldier lands on a foreign shore, care is taken that he is put upon a good soil, sheltered from hurtful winds, sun, or damp, and preserved from stench and other mischief. If he falls ill of any disease of the climate, the doctors know how to treat it, and have the proper medicines with them. If he gets wounded, he knows that the surgeons have not everything to learn, because gunshot wounds are rare at home, but that they have had a special training in treating hurts of this kind. Moreover, there are easy vehicles for carrying the wounded to the hospital, and all means on the spot for treating wounds, and rallying the strength of the wounded. All this is such a change from the old methods that the difference in the mortality of our armies is already very remarkable.

I need not spend space or time in telling the faults of the dress of our soldiers, up to a very recent date. A dress which compresses the throat, confines the chest and arms, and loads the head with a great weight, and galls the temples without shading the eyes, and pinches the feet, and makes the wearer cold in winter and hot in summer, and wears out as soon as possible, and gathers dust, and shrinks in damp; a dress like this has every imaginable fault, and scarcely a single recommendation; yet this has hitherto been the dress of the British soldier. He has not complained of it so much as might be expected. In fact, he has been rather vain of his tight coat, stiff stock, towering shako, and the knapsack which pulled at the leather belts across his chest. But if his English admirers could see him on the march or at work, they would find him less fond of his costume. They would see him unbuttoning, and throwing open or throwing off every article that had most distinguished him. Shako and stock have gone; the jacket hangs loose; the trousers are tucked up; and, moreover, the scarlet cloth has slit in half-a-dozen places, and the boots have burst at the sides, or are too stiff to get on and off.

We now know that the head must be well sheltered in all weathers and climates, and particularly in hot countries, without being loaded; and that the throat and chest must be free from pressure, and the feet well fitted with well-seasoned boots. Hence the reforms now in course of introduction. We are trying different caps and head-coverings, in India and everywhere. The chief of the department of army clothing has been studying the French methods of making everything that the soldier uses or wears, from the tent over his head to the shoes on his feet. Though the boots and shoes are made entirely by machinery, from the cutting out of the leather to the finishing stitches, every French soldier is fitted, and no French soldier has corns. The reason is that there are twenty-four sizes and shapes, out of which men of all dimensions can suit themselves. We are to adopt this method: and when we have done it, and become careful about our leather, we shall hear little more of our soldiers being foot-sore.

When we have ascertained what sort of headgear, with its white covering, suits tropical service best, we shall not lose so many soldiers by sunstroke as we do now. Meantime, the new tunic in the place of the tight coat, the growing discountenance of the stock and the shako; the improvement in all

materials; the good sewing by the machine; the increased use of flannel, and the careful superintendence of the washing of clothing and of the person, are all guarantees of a better state of health for the soldier than was imagined half a century ago.

The absurdity of feeding our soldiery on boiled beef, every day of their lives, as long as they were in the army, will scarcely be believed here after. We know better now. We know the mischief of giving men the same dinner every day; and we have obtained the advice of the best chemists as to the best diet for healthy men. By means of more knowledge and a better use of inventions, we can now give our soldiers a variety of meats, soups, puddings, and vegetables, such as they would not have enjoyed at home; and fresh bread, and good tea or coffee, — and all for the same money that the old system cost, or less. There can be roasting, stewing, and baking, just as well as the eternal boiling of old times. Thus may the modern soldier enjoy his meals, and keep up his strength on them, instead of being tempted to spend his money on dainties and drink.

With this enlargement of the dietary, another change, no less beneficial, has come in. Worse than overcrowded rooms at night, and disgusting food, and troublesome dress, has been the curse of the soldier, — the dullness of his life. People in ordinary life who pine for want of something to do and to care about, are subject to ailments which are called "the maladies of ennui." These are real diseases, though arising from moral causes. The brain wears upon itself, the nerves become disordered, and the various bodily functions are disturbed, just as in the case of a restless prisoner who is said to "eat his heart out" in captivity.

Soldiers in barracks, whether at home or abroad, have had some experience of this kind of misery. After parade, and after duly hurting their lungs by breathing the dust of pipe clay in dressing their belts, and then cleaning their arms, there was nothing before them but a dinner which they loathed, and parade again; and at night either a wet and cold guard, or the hot and pestilential barrack-room, crowded with hard-breathing sleepers. Drink, desertion, suicide, were the consequences of such a life; and it was on account of these manifest evils that the stir on behalf of regimental schools and reading-rooms began.

We are doing better now, and shall improve further. The most intelligent of the learners and readers were still helpless, outside their narrow range of exercises. When they went out to war, no one of them could make himself a shelter, or mend his clothes or shoes, or bake bread, or cook meat and vegetables. In adopting the new cooking apparatus, which has attracted so much delighted attention, the authorities have provided an excellent employment and strong interest for the soldiers. They are learning to cook as the soldiers of other countries do. Once having discovered the benefit of being able to shift for

themselves in one respect, they naturally desire to extend their attempts. They are learning to provide a shelter and warmth under difficulties. When encamped somewhere or other in the summer, they practise all the arts of camp life, — keeping themselves dry and warm, killing and trimming meat, getting good meals, draining and cleansing the camp, taking care of the horses, and repairing accidents to their clothes.

This last year there was such a camp on the Curragh of Kildare. There was a chorus of complaints and pity that men should be encamped on such a place in such a season: but the real friends of the soldier contended that it was the best kindness to him to let him take the run of seasons and circumstances. If men and horses were so badly off as was reported, it was from bad management, for there were facilities for drainage and road-making; and every soldier worthy of his vocation would rejoice, as many did, in an opportunity of practising the arts of his profession, and putting his own courage, and skill, and endurance to the proof.

But what was the remark of foreigners who heard the grumbling? Their remark bears a close relation to our present subject. They said, "The English soldier is the best paid, the best fed, and the best clothed soldier in Europe, and is always grumbling. The fact is, he is spoiled. He can provide nothing for himself; and when once out of the routine of barrack-life, is helpless."

If the English soldier ceases to be helpless, we may hope that the profession in which men are better paid, fed, clothed, and considered, than many other country in Europe, will not be so largely occupied as hitherto with scamps who get what they can, and then desert.

I read an anecdote lately * of military service in India, which explains, to a certain extent, the evil reputation of some of our soldiers, not in tropical regions only, but wherever they are too severely tried by dullness.

* Dunlop's "Hunting in the Himalaya." Chap. 5th.

Good officers in India encourage trustworthy soldiers in hunting in game regions, because all vigorous interests are of immense importance to men overwhelmed with ennui. The dullness of the hot season drives barrack soldiers, not only to drink, but to a kind of craziness. In order to get transported — that is, to get to Australia — the men of the Bengal army have affected insubordination to their officers. One after another threw a pair of gloves, or a cap, at the first officer he met. This went so far that the authorities announced that the punishment of death would be inflicted henceforth, instead of transportation.

The men disbelieved this. One of them threw his cap at a perfect stranger in the road, — judging him to be an officer by the gold band on his cap. It was an assistant-surgeon from Meerut. The surgeon was reluctant to give evidence, and did all he could to save the man; but the threat must be fulfilled, and the soldier was to be shot. The firing party took care not to hit him. In case of the aim failing, the sergeant's duty is to shoot the criminal with a pistol. The sergeant did his duty in this case; but he could not bear the thought of it, and made away with himself. He was found dead, floating in a well, a few days afterwards.

The natural comment on such a story as this is, that in other armies, the amusement of the soldiers is one of the institutions of the force; and Indian officers declare that any amount of money laid out in newspapers, illustrated periodicals, games, &c, for soldiers, in India and the colonies, would be well

spent. These things are, in fact, medicine for mind and body.

At home, the dullness is likely to be cured through the universal agreement that soldiers should have the change and recreation which are necessary to all other men. In addition to schools and reading-rooms, and to the new variety of practising the arts of life, as far as the soldier is concerned in them, we may hope to see a great spread of those manly sports which are the best possible recreation for soldiers. The authorities are encouraging the introduction of cricket and other games. Gardening, also, will be gladly countenanced and assisted on all hands.

Now, here is a career which ought to be eagerly sought. To the foreign account of the indulgence which the soldier enjoys, we English can add the higher considerations which attend a calling in which every man is called, not by the stern voice of law and authority, but by his own free thought and feeling. With us, every soldier is a volunteer. We have no conscription; and we are supposed to pamper our soldiers, in order to keep up our force. Yet, if our numbers are kept up, the quality has not hitherto been what we desire.

I do not believe that money will avail, — mere high pay. It is far more probable that certain reforms, present and future, will do it. Of those reforms, the very greatest is, no doubt, the practical abolition of the lash, within this year. The man worthy to be a soldier is no longer liable to flogging. Flogging cannot be altogether abolished till the scamp-element is rooted out of the army; but fellows of that order only are now liable to it. The new plan is to reduce any offender to a floggable condition first; and this affords opportunity for reform, and even for return into the class which cannot be flogged. A respectable soldier will not sink into the degraded rank; or if, by some unhappy lapse, he should do so, he will rise again, and not subject himself to the further degradation of the lash. In fact, a respectable soldier is now no more liable to the lash than a man of any other calling.

As for other reforms, we may see what they are by looking at our forces in China. The health of our troops there is higher than the health of soldiers was ever known to be, unless in the last days in the Crimea, when our army was recreated, and brought into the finest condition. In China, our troops are well fed, well clothed, well managed in health, and well cared for when wounded. Of the sick, there are scarcely any to speak of. From the date of that spectacle, the military profession assumes a new and bright aspect for the private soldier, as well as for his officers.

The profession ought to show the very largest amount of health and strength. The members of it are picked men for physical soundness and vigour. The recruit cannot pass unless he has a firm and straight spine, chest that will expand freely, joints that will work well, eyes that will see well, a voice that will resound well, ears that will hear well, strong limbs, a distinct utterance, a healthy throat, supple hands, an arched foot, and so on. Even sound teeth and straight and supple toes are required; and all signs of old disease are a cause of rejection. Men who set out with bodily advantages like these ought to have health and long life, apart from the perils of the battle-field, which destroy a very small proportion of the soldiers who die. There is every reason for confidence that the soldier will flourish henceforth. The causes of the great mortality are detected in course of rapid removal; and, as we see, there are already places to which we can point as showing the line state of vigour to

which the soldiery of England and her dependencies can be brought.

The state having done what it can, the rest will depend on the individual soldier. If he eschews excess of every kind, and indolence, he may pass a long life in comfort and vigour. If, moreover, he has a patriotic heart, or knowledge enough to be aware what it is to be at once a citizen and a defender of Old England, he may have a life of that higher order which is seasoned with a temper of heroism, and exalted by a severe spirit of honour. There is no reason why every private soldier and sailor should not be a "Happy Warrior, " as well as a Wellington or a Nelson. The reform in the Sailor's condition began many years before we took the lot of the soldier to heart. There can hardly be any one now living who could speak from observation of the penalties of a long voyage in the shape of vile smells in the ship, scurvy among the men, and mortality from ship-fever. It was long ago found possible to get rid of much of the bilge-water, and to clean and dry and air the berths, and to ventilate every place below decks, and to give the crews something else to eat than invariable salt beef and biscuit; and, lastly, to carry a preventive of scurvy in the form of lemon-juice. Now that preserved vegetables are becoming common, and meats are preserved otherwise than in pickle, and that it is found easy to have fresh bread, we may fully expect that the common diet at sea may be nearly as varied as that on shore. In the American navy there are several temperance ships which carry no spirits, except some brandy among the medical stores. Coffee is substituted for grog; and I have been assured by an experienced commander in that navy; that the health of the coffee-drinking crews is of a higher quality than that of grog-drinking crews. It is with a sort of wondering disgust that we think now of the scurvy-stricken ships' companies of old days, with nothing but hard biscuit and hard salt beef to eat, with their loose teeth and sore gums; — men actually rotting to death for want of a variety of food. We understand now what elements in food are necessary to the supply of the frame, and in what proportion they should be given; and most of these are so easily stowed, and keep so well, that there is no reason (though there is still some prejudice), in favour of the sailor going on to live on salt meat and biscuit, without any change. Part of the fault lies with Jack himself. He is an old-fashioned fellow, and sticks to old ways. Even our sickly soldiers in the Crimea had a notion that they did not like preserved vegetables, and pointed with contempt to the small dimensions of the compressed sort: but they learned their value at last, and found them a most effectual medicine and welcome luxury. So will Jack learn in time to prize several kinds of food, and modes of cookery, which will keep out scurvy; and sooner or later there will be, in ordinary cases, no more excuse for disease from faulty diet on board ship than anywhere else.

Jack likes to be clean. There are some nasty fellows in that way of life, as in every other; but, take our marine all round, the crews are above the average of men in cleanliness of person and lodging. This being the case, it is felt to be a great blessing that the chemists have given us a soap which will wash clothes clean in salt water. In old times, the crew's linen was never thoroughly dry, and never thoroughly clean, with all the washing and drying that could be bestowed upon it. Now it is real proper washing; and this, and the constant airing of the bedding, and the careful watch kept over the damp and dirt, lengthens the life of the sailor for many years.

The remaining evils are partly due to the calling itself, and partly to Jack's own folly.

The interrupted sleep of all seamen, from the commander to the cabin-boy, is injurious, and tends to shorten life. If it is so in the case of medical men on shore, it must be more so at sea, where it is the regular practice to take sleep in small portions, and at varying times. Two hours now, and four hours another time, and then two hours again, and seldom more than four hours at a stretch, is not a due supply for hardworking men. The plan may be the best practicable, on the whole, for the safety of the ship, and the welfare of the crew; but it cannot be called good for any body's brain.

I need say nothing about trying climates and vicissitudes of weather, except to observe that as so many ships' companies have gone to the poles and round the globe, without loss of life from cold, heat, or storm, the lot of the sailor cannot be considered worse than that of other workers whose vocation is outdoor labour.

It is only in extremely long voyages that the dullness of the way of life can be complained of; and the few cases in which it might occur are met in such a generous and genial spirit by the authorities at home, and the officers on board, that the occasion causes more admiration than regret or pity. At the North Pole, or the South, in the midst of the Pacific, or when detained on remote stations for weeks or months together, amusements are introduced, as soon as there is danger of Jack's time hanging heavy on his hands. There is music; there is dancing; there are games; moreover, there are amateur theatricals. Nobody loves the theatre better than Jack, and very well does he usually act his part upon the stage. While the affair of a play is on hand, there is no dullness among the crew. In ordinary times and short voyages, the old fashion of story-telling answers as well as ever; and it probably always will, when it is too dark on deck to read.

Jack will become a reader too, before long, in the Royal Navy, if not in the Merchant Service. There are schools now for seamen as well as soldiers. There is also a much higher practice of observation, and of scientific study and reporting, in our navy than at any former time: and the humblest seaman may take an interest, and perhaps give assistance, in these matters, if he has intelligence and good taste enough to do so.

The great peril to his health — that which outweighs all others put together — arises from his own weakness. I need only refer to his too common behaviour on first coming ashore after a long voyage. He wastes his health in excess of every kind, and his money in silly extravagance, and his reputation in wild follies. He is sadly weak and wild sometimes in remote countries, where he may contrive to land; and the ship's surgeon gravely laments such opportunities of Jack's playing the fool; but nowhere is he more grossly imprudent than in the first place in England where he goes ashore. Who can tell how many of our promising young seamen have poisoned their whole after lives by excesses for which there is no excuse?

Or, if our seamen believed formerly that there was some excuse for them, they cannot say so now. There are so many Seamen's Homes now open in our ports, so well-provided with comforts at an economical rate, and offering such advantages in their banks for securing savings at once, that a sailor who puts himself in the way of sickness and sorrow on his arrival at home can only hang his head in bitter shame. And there I leave him.

As for the wiser ones, who use the Homes, and take rational care of their health and fortunes, they will certainly admit that their lot in life is, on the whole, a good one. Sailors are generally and strongly attached to their profession; and landsmen can easily understand what charms it may have. It has also involved some hardships so serious, that we cannot wonder that some prejudice should hang about the service in the Royal Navy at this day. Instead of describing these, it is necessary only to point out the reform which is to begin on the 1st of April next. As in the army, it is only the lowest scamps who will after that be subject to the lash. Offenders will have trial by court-martial on board, and the punishments will be more varied, and better graduated. The commander has power to judge and punish summarily in urgent cases; but crews will be protected from the hasty humours of ill-tempered captains, and be under the jurisdiction of a court, like landsmen. There will be no new license for them, but, rather, increased strictness against neglect of duty, desertion, and misconduct before the enemy, as well as bad language and misbehaviour at all times. It is for Jack so to conduct himself under the change as to afford no occasion to prejudiced persons to wish to re-establish the unchecked power of the lash.

I say nothing of the cruelties we too often hear of as practised on board merchant vessels by others besides American captains. A seaman who puts himself in the way of such treatment, when the Royal Navy is open to him, with all its security, its comforts, its increased pay, and its pensions and rewards, may get such redress as the law affords, but will not be so pitied as if he had not made a foolish choice of an employer. It has been quite true that the merchant service yielded higher pay; and it is always true that it takes Jack a long time to understand new arrangements: and thus it is that we have not nearly so many seamen as we want. But this mistake will be mended. The new advantages of the naval service will be come known and believed in our ports, and discussed in our Sailors' Homes, and then England will have a body of defenders in her seas as full of health and vigour as they have always been of zeal and love for their country.

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